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Black Fathers Experiences of Paternal Abandonment Through Raising & Disciplining Their Sons

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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William Douglas Harvey

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Black Fathers Experiences of Paternal Abandonment Through Raising & Disciplining
Their Sons

by

William Douglas Harvey

MBA, Western Governor's University, 2018

BSN, University of Phoenix, 2013

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human & Social Services

Walden University

July 2021

Abstract

Black male children have long experienced paternal abandonment. In some instances, those male children grow up to have sons of their own, yet have no frame of reference of fatherhood from their upbringing. The specific issue for this study was exploring the capacity to control the quality of one's life entering fatherhood, even when considering the influences related to paternal abandonment. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of paternally abandoned Black fathers and their experience of raising their male offspring, to understand how those Black fathers' past occurrence may affect their relationships with their male offspring. Through primary data collection of five semi-structured interviews and the use of thematic analysis of transcripts, several themes emerged to support the research questions that framed this study. Noted themes included the experiences of abandoned Black fathers, specific effects on parenting, and the influence of paternal abandonment on disciplining the male offspring of abandoned Black fathers. Recommendations for Black men and their families included the integration of counseling, to seek a deeper understanding of the individual who has experienced paternal abandonment. Counseling was noted to lead to an awareness of abandonment that subsequently led to healthier familial relationships between the abandoned Black male and their families. Recommendations for future research included examining the relationship between unique abandonment experiences and the ability to fulfill fatherhood responsibilities amongst the abandoned. Positive social change in the Black community can be elicited by curtailing the cycle of paternal abandonment and the negative social outcomes that may stem from the phenomena.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Sharon Elizabeth Harvey. While there are many who I have met along my academic, professional, and life's journey, but no one has been more influential, from the beginning, in me becoming the man I am today than my mother. The guidance, sacrifice, and love she has so unselfishly given throughout my life have been truly remarkable, and I am eternally grateful. Thank you, ma.

I also wish to dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Jennifer Lynne Harvey. In composing this research and going through this journey, I gained better perspective on not just myself, but the challenge that this can present to one's spouse. The love and support you've shown me through our marriage, this process, and in life means more than you may ever know. I love you.

Last, but not least, I dedicate this dissertation to my father, William James Sorden. One could postulate that you are the inspiration for my research. And perhaps they would be right. But know that I mean no harm or hold any ill will in my words. In your way, you have been a driving force in shaping who I have become as a man and as I hope, one day, as a father. I love you dad, and always will.

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I would also like to posthumously thank my late uncle, Douglas Scott. Growing up I always said he was the best male influence of my life, but in reflecting on who I've become through this journey, he's simply one of my greatest influences. He showed me what a man could truly be when he rose above that which weighed him down and found his true self. Thank you, Uncle Douglas. I would also like to send a posthumous thank you to the greatest nursing influence in my life, Jeanne Smith. Her influence in my development into the nurse, professional, and leader I am today is unrivaled. No matter how much I may achieve, she is the standard I strive toward, thank you, Jeanne. Thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The occurrence of paternal abandonment (father-absence) has been understood as a widespread epidemic in the United States over the past several decades (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2020). No matter the cause of abandonment, from the father's death, incarceration, or the father choosing not to be in the child's life for a variety of reasons, paternal abandonment has been shown to significantly impact the lives and outcomes of the children left behind (Flouri et al., 2015). Men who have experienced paternal abandonment in their past can encounter a host of negative social outcomes, including an increased likelihood of incarceration, falling behind or dropping out of school, suffering health deficits, experiencing physical and cognitive deficits, and enduring a multitude of maladaptive behavioral issues throughout their lifespan (McLanahan et al., 2013). In a study of 21 adult Black men who were raised in father-absent homes, all participants frequently experienced increased feelings of abandonment, loss, and negative emotional issues such as anxiety, depression, or increased proclivity to violence throughout their adult life. This led to further social, mental, and physical difficulties throughout their lifespan (East et al., 2017).

What can compound the issue further is living in a densely populated metropolitan area. These men, ages of 25-35, tend to experience specific negative social outcomes, such as limited access to quality education or quality healthcare, as well as gender and race inequalities, due to sparse urban resource allocation, as well as experiencing higher crime rates, and the various psychological demands of urban areas

(Austin et al., 2009; Sikweyiya et al., 2016). These aforementioned negative outcomes can manifest into adverse effects such as fluctuations in perceived stress, workplace instability, low self-esteem, and other behavioral problems including aggression, low frustration threshold, and violence that has been linked to and can be exacerbated by being raised in a father-absent home (Castillo et al., 2011; Muñoz-laboy et al., 2015). Given the effect that a father's presence (or lack thereof) can have on the overall development and social contribution of their offspring, paternal abandonment is a significant social issue (Jackson et al., 2010; Pougnet et al., 2011).

The male offspring of Black fathers who have survived paternal abandonment are at a greater risk of encountering abandonment in their own lives and raising and disciplining a child may result in children being at risk of being disciplined by a Black father dealing with their maladaptive social issues (Murray & Farrington, 2005; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2015). While previous research supported the notion that a better understanding of the emotions, perceptions, and experiences of Black men who've experienced paternal abandonment could yield positive sociological change, more research is needed to understand the nuances of how this minority population experiences the process of raising and disciplining their male offspring in an urban metropolitan area, especially given the high prevalence of the issue of paternal abandonment (McLanahan et al., 2013). This is especially important given that recent research, in drawing attention to the bevy of commentary regarding child-rearing amongst Black mothers, highlights the need to understand Black fathers and their methods of child discipline (Adkison et al., 2016).

Background

Parents play a fundamental role in the upbringing of their children by providing resources necessary to sustain their children's lives (East et al., 2017). Parents are responsible for providing for the basic fundamental needs of the children including food, shelter, and clothing, alongside other material goods that positively contribute to the children's development (Carlson, 2006). Parents may also provide an emotional support system and structure for the growing child while providing the necessary warmth, control, monitoring, and mentoring. However, the ideal conditions are not always available within a given family, as evident in conditions such as poverty, families grappling with various social determinants of health, and the unavailability of one parent, namely, the father. In such a scenario, the investment into a child's life diminishes while the familial support system crumbles as the socioeconomic and psychosocial advantages of a child living with two parents disappear (East et al., 2017).

The importance of a stable family setting was explored by Pougnet et al. (2011) who highlighted the importance of established connections between fathers and their offspring. For instance, the presence of fathers during middle childhood of their daughters is likely to contribute to the lower occurrence of the child internalizing negative behaviors, such as being withdrawn or increased anxiety, during the stage of preadolescence (Pougnet et al., 2011). Moreover, in both genders, the fathers play key roles alongside the mothers in boosting the performance intelligence quotient (IQ) of the children, while contributing to positive behavioral and cognitive functioning (Pougnet et al., 2011). Such information is useful in realizing the developmental gap that may be

created by the absence of a parent from a child's life, especially in the critical developing stages, to properly understand the far-reaching effects of parental abandonment in adulthood.

Definition of Father Absence

Father absence can be used to refer to situations in which a child lives apart from their biological father due to divorce, separation, or nonmarital birth; deviating from intact biological families and may result in single-parent or social-father families (McLanahan et al., 2013). One of the major effects of father absence is the decrease in the volume of resources available within the family setting. In the case of middle or low-income families, this can result in the straining of the mother's available resources. As a result, the family's standards of living may be lowered, subsequently leading to poverty (Carlson, 2006). This can evolve into stressful situations for the child, potentially creating a negative influence on the child's overall mental health and well-being (Flouri et al., 2015).

In the face of such stress, the absence of the father undermines the available support system to a family, which would otherwise be useful for coping with difficult situations when they arise. Continued stress can undermine the mental health and development of the child, especially in terms of personal growth, and this can further inhibit social-emotional development. Induced stress can also threaten the overall physical health of the child. This can manifest in health conditions such as obesity, heart diseases, and diabetes mellitus, due to changing the normal eating habits of the child (Austin et al., 2009). This is particularly relevant during critical stages of development,

such as the adolescent stage, where perpetuated stress can worsen eating disorders that contribute to the aforementioned conditions, amongst others (Austin et al., 2009).

According to Austin, Smith, and Patterson (2009), the dietary habits of the child may be severely compromised by the stressful situations and can result in poor dietary choices and meals rich in fatty and unhealthy foods.

Background of Effects

The effect on the mental health of the child can have far-reaching effects beyond short-term personal effects. For instance, educational attainment can be impeded due to a loss of motivation, focus, or concentration, which in turn can affect the long-term career path of the child (McLanahan et al., 2013). This further impedes the soft skills and interpersonal development of the child, which can have extensive effects on an individual's career, relationships, and various other aspects of life in adulthood (McLanahan et al., 2013). Additionally, father-absence can contribute to self-esteem issues in children, which can manifest in peer problems, feelings of inadequacy, substance use, or subsequent abuse. Some research findings indicate that behavioral problems are a higher risk for males than females when faced with father-absence (Flouri et al., 2015).

Research indicates that fatherhood absence has widespread effects that are not limited children, as it affects adults as well. For instance, a single mother can be placed under the stress of assuming both parental roles in a father-absent home while working to provide for the child or multiple children at a time. This can affect the overall mental and even physical health of the mother, which can result in increased depression, anxiety, and

other detrimental health issues throughout the mother's lifespan (McLanahan et al., 2013; Flouri et al., 2015).

The effects of father absence can extend well beyond childhood. For instance, the capacity of adults to provide their children with parental care is significantly influenced by their parental upbringing, including the presence or absence of the father (East et al., 2017). The absence of the father can result in the child developing a sense of unpreparedness, lack of confidence, or perpetuating father-absence as an adult. Carlson (2006) noted that research, without causal interference, should also focus on conditions necessary for positive father involvement to improve the welfare of children.

Another important point of consideration is that not all fathers are absent from the upbringing process of their children. Gordon et al. (2013) noted that little attention has been given to the role that Black fathers play in imparting life lessons to their sons, even if the father is partially involved in the child's life. This is useful in highlighting that there are fathers who are present in the lives of their children, actively providing role models, guidance, and discipline throughout their upbringing. In turn, this has positive effects on the child's well-being that extend throughout their various life stages and development.

Problem Statement

Although the aforementioned research regarding paternal abandonment illuminates several important findings, limited research exists that has examined the perspective of paternally abandoned Black fathers, throughout the ages of 25-35, with a history of behavioral issues, and their experience of raising and disciplining their male offspring. Further research is warranted that could examine the issue of paternal

abandonment in an effort to better understand the documented problem of Black fathers with a history of behavioral issues, and the lived experience of raising and disciplining their male offspring and the effect on the father/son relationship (Carlson, 2006; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2015).

A review of the literature around this topic area, especially focused on the works of McLanahan et al. (2013), Gordon et al. (2013), Flouri et al. (2015), and Adkison et al. (2016), demonstrates that there is a need for further research in the area of paternal abandonment to fill the prevailing gaps. This study has the potential to elicit positive social change by fostering a better, more coherent, and exhaustive understanding of this paradigm of the parent-child relationship, which will aid in the proper understanding of the effect of father absence. The current literature tends to use cross-sectional data alongside methods that do not involve the consideration of the occurrence of reverse causality and possibly overlooked or omitted variables. Additionally, there is a need for research that considers the ethnic background of the father-child dynamic and the gender of the child to gain a proper perspective (Flouri et al., 2015). In particular, there is a need to understand the developmental needs and dynamics involved in the Black community to create awareness among the male population (Gordon et al., 2013).

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of paternally abandoned Black fathers, throughout the ages of 25-35, with a history of behavioral problems, living in an Eastern U.S. metropolitan area, and their experience in raising and disciplining their male offspring to better understand how those Black fathers'

past experiences with paternal abandonment may affect their current and future relationships with their male offspring. In understanding the perceptions of this subject group and how their experiences play a role in their understanding of fathering and child-rearing, there exists a possibility to positively impact human and social services. Achieving this positive impact does not only include the mitigation of known social, physical, and mental issues this group may face, but also in working to support, empower, and understand survivors of paternal abandonment so that human service professionals can help this group positively contribute to progressive social change by better understanding the participant's plight. Research shows that the increased involvement and presence of fathers in a child's life has been associated with a range of positive social outcomes for the affected child, including, but not limited to, a lower proclivity to violence, improved health and cognitive outcomes, and less prevalence of maladaptive social issues (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2020).

Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following research questions;

Research Question 1: How do paternally abandoned Black fathers describe the lived experiences of raising and disciplining their male offspring?

Research Question 2: How does having male offspring influence these fathers' views on fatherhood?

Research Question 3: How do these Black fathers describe the experience of paternal abandonment?

Significance

Despite the progress in understanding aspects of paternal abandonment, a gap still exists in understanding the perceptions of Black fathers with a history of behavioral issues regarding child-rearing and the effects their experiences can have on their relationships with their male offspring, especially in an urban area (Carlson, 2006; Flouri et al., 2015; Murray & Farrington, 2005). For the contributions to human and social services, there is a possibility that a better understanding of the emotions and perceptions of this subject group may yield positive sociological change through promoting improved social stability and better utilization of urban resources, especially those designed to provide family support and socio-economic growth. A better understanding of how those with different parental upbringing and social circumstances, especially those who've experienced childhood abandonment, can foster a better understanding of how to mentor and support these adults as they navigate through the challenges of raising a child in an urban metropolitan environment.

Framework

Social cognitive theory (SCT) is used to understand the capacity to control the nature and quality of one's own life, even when considering various social influences (Bandura, 2001). SCT highlights the impact of observational learning and emotional development through imitating and modeling others in one's social circle (Bandura, 2001). SCT also emphasizes the importance of the continuous interactions between other behaviors, personal factors, and the environment (known as the reciprocal causation model) that has an unequal influence on one's developing behavior (Bandura, 2001).

Depending on the influence, presence, or lack thereof, with one of the factors in the triad of the reciprocal causation model, there can be significant differences in the outcomes of one's personality and development (Bandura, 2001).

In the occurrence of paternal abandonment, men who have been paternally abandoned have the ability of intentionality, forethought, self-regulation, and self-reflectiveness about how their past and their actions may shape the lives of their offspring (Bandura, 2001; Brumley, 2018). SCT is used to frame the potential benefit, or detriment, of these fathers not cultivating the opportunity to stay actively involved with their children and potentially perpetuate the negative contribution to the social occurrence that can evolve from paternal abandonment. As with other change theories, SCT can be used to not only understand the occurrence but to design/plan interventions, manage and assess interventions, and perhaps most importantly, to scale and reevaluate the true impact of fatherhood involvement and discipline and the effect on future generations (Mayne, 2015).

Nature of the Study

For this study, I used a phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of paternally abandoned Black fathers, throughout the ages of 25-35, with a history of behavioral problems, living in an Eastern U.S. metropolitan area, experiencing the process of raising and disciplining their male offspring, to better understand how their past experiences with paternal abandonment may affect their relationships with their male offspring. This phenomenological approach was one of several approaches suited for qualitative study by not only helping to diminish the identified literary gap but also

contributing to sociological change in providing a better understanding of these unique family dynamics.

There were limitations to this qualitative phenomenological study based on several variables. As with many qualitative phenomenological studies, the quality of data can be highly subjective and prone to bias. Especially given the relatively small sample size synonymous with qualitative research, any potential results may not be representative of a larger sample of the same group. Ensuring validity, credibility, and trustworthiness was paramount to the data collection and analysis process.

My role in this study was to be that of facilitator, being forthright with any preconceived notions or personal experiences, yet objective in the analysis and presentation of such results. To not just maintain credibility, but to protect the participant's personal information and sensitive narratives, I provided informed consent forms and promised confidentiality and privacy to all participants and their families. Due to the design of the questions and the nature of the research, there was a chance for potentially sensitive questioning and responses of an uncomfortable nature that required the protection of names, personal information, and any data that had the potential to put the participants at risk was of the utmost importance. I presented my obtained data and the transcription of interviews as objectively as possible to reduce the perception of bias.

I addressed potential ethical barriers with full transparency by informing the participants of any course of action I took with their information. I presented the transcription of the interviews as objectively and impartially as possible to reduce any perception of bias. Full transparency and honesty was the most ethical approach.

Possible Types and Sources of Data

I used semi-structured interviews with purposefully sampled participants as the primary data source for this study. I used purposive sampling to gather five participants who were paternally abandoned Black fathers that fit within the inclusion criteria. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants, using content analysis, transcription, and coding to explore key phrases, words, or experiences shared amongst the participants. Through coding, transcriptions, and interpretation, especially of the common social outcomes and depiction of experiences of the participants, I examined the lived experiences of the lived experiences of paternally abandoned Black men and their perception of fatherhood and child-rearing.

Limitations, Challenges, and/or Barriers

My biggest challenge was sourcing and recruiting active participants with the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Once I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I strictly adhered to proper media forums and the explicit promotion of transparency and confidentiality within my study to set the correct expectations for the participants. Another challenge was the potential for conflict of interest. While I am not a father, I am a paternally abandoned Black man within the age range of the participants. Through the data analysis and coding process, I took additional steps to ensure objectivity and reduce bias. As well as bias reflexivity, I used a reflexive journal in which I took note as to how I may have influenced the responses while interviewing each participant. I then used the reflections to inform the participants of the possible objectivity in data interpretation. I automatically excluded any potential participant who I had any prior relationship with.

Summary

In this chapter, the issue of the occurrence of father-absence (paternal abandonment) has been discussed as the topic of research. The background work into the research topic shows that Black adult males who've experienced paternal abandonment in their past can encounter a host of negative social outcomes, including an increased likelihood to be incarcerated, fall behind or drop out of school, suffer health and cognitive deficits, as well as endure a multitude of maladaptive behavioral issues throughout their lifespan (McLanahan et al., 2013). What can compound the issue further is when the occurrence of paternal abandonment is focused through the lens of Black men who live in and endure the rigors of a densely populated metropolitan area; of these men, those ages 25-35, have shown a tendency to experience specific negative social outcomes due to sparse urban resource allocation, higher crime rates, and various psychological demands of urban areas (Austin et al., 2009; Sikweyiya et al., 2016).

A review of the literature on the topic of research has revealed a significant gap in research. The gap was evidenced by the lack of information concerning the nuances of how this minority population experiences the process of raising and disciplining their male offspring in an urban metropolitan area, especially given the high prevalence to perpetuate the issue of paternal abandonment (McLanahan et al., 2013). Consequently, limited research exists that has examined the perspective of paternally abandoned Black fathers, throughout the ages of 25-35, with a history of behavioral issues, and their experience of raising and disciplining their male offspring.

As a result, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of paternally abandoned Black fathers, throughout the ages of 25-35, with a history of behavioral problems, living in an eastern U.S. metropolitan area, and their experience in raising and disciplining their male offspring to better understand how those Black fathers' past experiences with paternal abandonment may affect their relationships with their male offspring (East, et al., 2017; Murray & Farrington, 2005). The significance of the research has the potential to enable the provision of better human and social services through the promotion of healthy coping skills and effective family dynamics in the future (Castillo et al., 2011; National Fatherhood Initiative, 2020). SCT forms the theoretical framework used in the research to help provide a comprehensive view of the capacity to control the nature and quality of one's life even considering various social influences (Bandura, 2001). The next chapter will provide a literary review that helps to understand the gap in prior research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The presence of a father can be crucial in molding a child's life. [I suggest putting more into this as a separate paragraph. Two more sentences would be good, perhaps about the importance of understanding the impact of absent fathers.]

In this chapter I will discuss the reasons for a father's absence as well as a father's influence on the development and well-being of the children. Reasons for the father's absence that will be discussed include divorce, inability to meet financial responsibilities, immigration policies, incarceration, denied and unknown paternity, father's own experience of being fathered, and premature death. Both the positive and negative influence of the father on the development and well-being of the children will be discussed.

A father figure is an object of security, love, and identity. At times, a father is needed when a child needs a person to rebel against safely. The absence of a father has immense negative effects on the development, upbringing, and well-being of a male child. Notably, the age at which a child separates from their father, whether it is during adolescence or preadolescence stage or pre-school or middle school, all can have various long and short-term effects on a child (McCord et al., 1962).

The U.S. Congress (1984) asserted that various forces influence the capability of a father to be involved in the life of a child. Factors could be either within the family or outside the family such as poor income and illnesses. The relationship a father has with the child's mother also influences the father's involvement in a child's life.

Reasons for Father-absence

The issue of father-absence has remained a major point of concern in many families across the world (Mather, 2010). The cases of father-absence continue to escalate at the same trajectory as the number of new fathers continue to grow. In the United States, the prevalence of father-absence is linked to a combination of social, cultural, historical, and economic factors (East et al., 2006). Therefore, father absence is largely attributed to the inability to meet financial responsibilities, divorce, immigration policies, incarceration, denied and unknown paternity, a father's experience of being fathered, and premature death (East et al., 2006).

Inability to Meet Financial Responsibilities

The inability of fathers to meet their financial responsibilities is a common cause of father-absence. Traditionally, fathers are known to be the pillars of the family, primarily due to their responsibility of providing for the family (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). This construct of masculinity makes fathers who cannot provide appear to be useless in the family. Unlike the Western culture that considers emotional support to be as much important as financial support, the Black community holds high associations between fatherhood and the ability to provide for the family more than anything else (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). As such, a Black father who cannot provide for his children loses respect in the eyes of the mother and children in the Black community. Fagan and Barnett (2003) established that mothers gauge the paternal competence of fathers depending on their ability to financially provide for the family. Notably, the feelings of shame and embarrassment incurred by fathers due to their inability to adequately meet financial

obligations for their families have been cited as a contributing factor for fathers abandoning their families (Khunou, 2006). Additionally, the pressure that comes from the demands of the female spouse and children could be overwhelming to the father, causing him to abandon the family.

Divorce

Mather (2010) explained that the United States experienced a sharp rise in the number of single-parent households in the 1970s and 80s, which consequently led to the initiation of policies that were aimed at strengthening the marriage institution to ensure that children were raised by both parents. Since then, divorce has emerged as a significant cause of father absence in many families across the country. The majority of couples who seek divorce usually have children under 18 years of age. In many cases where divorce occurs in parents with young children, mothers win custody of the children more readily than fathers (Khunou, 2006). This leads to father absence in the everyday life of the children. Fagan and Barnett (2003) reported that fathers generally experience reduced contact with their children once they are divorced with their mother. In addition, divorce usually escalates father absence if the father is a nonresident of the United States because, in such cases, the chances of children meeting the father diminishes with time. Father absence may be a result of the mother's obstructive attempts to lock out the father's involvement in the child's upbringing, especially after divorce (Pruett et al., 2003). Mothers who do not recognize the contribution of fathers toward the child's upbringing may resort to gatekeeping in an attempt to exclude the father from raising the child (McBride et al., 2005). As such, mothers' actions of maternal gatekeeping may involve

taking custody of the children and then restricting the father's involvement and access to children.

Immigration Policies

The implementation of immigration laws comes with detrimental social costs for the family unit. Immigrants move to the United States in large numbers to seek employment and better their lives and immigration policies are continually tightened to return undocumented immigrants to their home countries (Gonzalez & Consoli, 2012). The result is that many immigrants face deportation that causes separation of families. Deportation of any family member results in trauma in both the deported and the remaining family members alike. As such, father-absence due to deportation could have a more pronounced impact on the development and well-being of a child than divorce. Fathers are more likely to be deported than mothers; hence, parental deportation remains among the leading cause of involuntary separation of fathers from their children (Gubernskaya & Dreby, 2017). Deportation has contributed to the separation of more than one million families in the United States since 1997 (Gonzalez & Consoli, 2012). Men being at higher risk of being deported means that many children in the United States are facing father absence as a result of father deportation.

Incarceration

A significant number of cases of father absence in the United States are due to father imprisonment. Men make up the majority of thousands of individuals who are incarcerated in American prisons (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Most of the incarcerated parents are fathers with children under 18 years old. A good number of incarcerated

individuals are fathers who have been forced by the law to be absent from their families as their children grow and develop. Even though children are allowed to visit their fathers in prison, their father's presence is seldomly felt back at home. According to Wakefield and Uggen (2010), the rates of incarceration are strikingly high for poorly-educated Black men living in relatively poor neighborhoods. Children from minority families, therefore, suffer father absence more than others due to father incarceration. Notably, father absence as a result of incarceration may have effects on the growth and development of a child such as the evolution of aggressive behaviors and increased attention problems (Geller, et al., 2012).

Denied and Unknown Paternity

Fathers may be absent from the lives of their children due to denied or unknown paternity. Some fathers may deny paternity to their children because they do not wish to take responsibility for raising a family. In other cases, fathers may be absent because they are not aware of the fact that they fathered a child. Several studies have documented children who do not know the whereabouts of their fathers (Clowes et al., 2013; Nduna & Manyatshe, 2014). Such children experience psychological distress because they lack a sense of identity. The mother may not know the real father of the child or sometimes she may deliberately conceal the information from the child for various reasons. One reason is that in modern society, some single mothers may opt to raise a child on their own without involving the father, and therefore choose not to disclose the identity of the father to the child (Nduna & Manyatshe, 2014).

Eliot (2010) has shown that the lack of a father in the home has psychological implications on a child. Existing research shows that a child growing up without a father or a father figure due to denial or unknown paternity is likely to experience more adverse psychological impact than children who grow up with a father. Nduna and Manyatshe (2014) show that a majority of malicious mothers make the father seem bad in the eyes of their children. Nduna and Manyatshe (2014) show that this can have detrimental psychological effects on the child throughout their adulthood. According to Elliot (2010), these adverse influences are persuasive in forming the perspective about paternal absence due to denial or unknown paternity and tend to have far-reaching negative consequences on the idea of a father or fatherly love.

Father's Own Experience of Being Fathered

Fathers who are raising young children are highly influenced by how their parents raised them. Children tend to learn from their parents how they will raise their families later in life. According to Elliot (2010), men who were raised in the presence of a father figure tend to perceive father involvement as a core aspect of a child's upbringing. On the other hand, father absence results in men having weak perceptions of father involvement. Therefore, children who were raised in the absence of their fathers may abandon their children because they do not value fatherhood.

Premature Death

A significant number of children are abandoned by their fathers due to premature death (McLanahan et al., 2013). The premature death of fathers unexpectedly disconnects them from their children. The death of fathers causes both emotional and financial

damage to the family, and children are most affected. Accidental deaths are one of the leading causes of premature deaths in the United States. Many hazardous jobs in various industries are assumed by men, which puts them at risk of suffering an injury, including death, while on the job. Most of the men who die while on the job usually have young children that are left without a father. Prior research suggest risky behaviors such as violent crimes have also cost the lives of many young fathers in the United States. (McLanahan et al., 2013). Most violent crimes including robbery, homicides, and felony assaults are committed by young men compared to women. A significant number of young fathers lose their lives either as victims or perpetrators of violent crimes in the United States. According to Høeg et al. (2016), another common cause of death of young fathers involves violence. Some children are rendered fatherless because their fathers are killed as a result of domestic violence (Høeg et al., 2016).

A growing body of studies shows that early parental loss through death can result in negative psychological experiences for the child. According to Høeg et al. (2016), the child may develop maladaptive coping strategies that include increased levels of self-blame and emotional eating. Consequently, Ellis et al. (2013) indicate that children who are born and raised in intact homes do better on average as adults, enjoy a higher quality of life, have fewer mental health issues, better health overall, and enjoy greater academic achievement. Moreover, existing research studies contend that adults who were brought up in intact homes have better financial and social health which in turn impacts positively in the manner in which their children are raised (Ellis et al., 2013). However, according to Høeg et al. (2018), the findings on whether loss of a parent can be associated with

differences in adult relationships, and how they affect the upbringing of the children, has been inconclusive, which calls for more research to be done on this area of study.

Fathers' Influence on Development and Well-Being of Children

Positive Influences

Father-absence has long-term effects on the emotions of a child. The trauma caused by a relationship breakdown or the loss of a father can be significantly impactful on the behavior of a child (Marshall et al., 2001). The adjustment period is often related to various factors such as the quality of the environment in which the child is brought up, the temperament of the child, their gender, and also the child's age. The family composition also affects how well a child copes with the consequences of not having a father (Mott et al., 1997). Symptoms such as deficits in social and cognitive competence are likely to be caused by the lack of a dependable father figure. The negative reaction of a mother to the absence of a spouse also increases these disturbances (Bishop & Lane, 2000). Sons who have no father figure to identify with often develop strong feelings and sentiments toward their absent fathers. This can lead to the male child rejecting the role of a father and their importance in a family unit. This could cause an individual to be conflicted about themselves and their intimate relationships (Jones et al., 2003). Children can also over-identify with the absent father figure. Despite the lack of commitment, contact, or interest from a father, the boy child is likely to create a false or fantasized image and a character about the father they wish for from various pieces of discontinuous information which could easily give an improper impression of a father figure that could negatively impact the child through adulthood (Beaty, 1995).

Fitzsimons and Villadsen (2019) suggest that the attachment theory shows the significance of the parent-child relationship, which is adversely affected by paternal departure. Dubeau et al. (2013), also highlight the significance of the father-child connection concerning the attachment theory. In terms of attachment theory, the mother-child attachment bond determines the emotional maturation, sensitivity, and interpersonal relationships of the child in later stages and can be compared to the father-child relationship (Su et al., 2017). Therefore, the child can use the father's presence as a secure base when coping with emotional duress and sensitivity. The paternal relationship is also pivotal in determining whether the child will develop internalizing or externalizing emotional tendencies that may affect them in adolescence (McMahon et al., 2019; Su et al., 2017).

Fathers influence the social development of children in the form of social skills and social adjustment. According to Dubeau et al. (2013), the time spent by fathers on interaction with their children enables the fathers to take up the obligation of opening the children to the world in general. This is supported by Su et al. (2017) who assert that presence of a father is significantly associated with positive effect prosocial behavior in children at elementary schools. Additionally, the father also serves as a social connection between the familial environment and the extrafamilial environment, by inducing contact between the external environment and the children. This aids the children in social adjustments and the subsequent development of social skills, as the father provides a sense of security in their social exploration (Dubeau et al., 2013; Su et al., 2017).

Fathers provide a support system for their spouses, which provides a conducive environment for upholding the mental health of mothers (Fitzsimons & Villadsen, 2019). This helps foster a stable and peaceful environment that is necessary for the proper development and well-being of children. For instance, Schneider (2017), notes that father involvement provides economic contributions that alleviate the economic toll on the family, which would otherwise affect the family environment negatively. Fathers may also help with house chores and tasks, which affords mothers time to bond with their children (Su et al., 2017; Magnus & Benoit, 2017). McCord and McCord (1958) note that maternal warmth from mother-child bonding is an important aspect of childhood development, even when paternal figures are involved in the family.

Fathers influence children during early childhood and adolescence through role modeling behavior (McCord & McCord, 1958; Nierengarten, 2019). This is an important influence, as it helps children determine how they are supposed to fulfill their roles in relationships and decision-making (Stevenson & Black, 1988). Furthermore, fathers are perceived by their children as influential when they are present and supportive (Levant et al., 2018). According to Pougnet et al (2011), fathers may influence their sons more than daughters in childhood development due to gender differences. Father involvement and availability is important to provide their sons with role models. This role modeling behavior is not simply based on the advice and instructions given by the father, but also from the observation of the father's actions, which provides some form of guidance. The strong message obtained from fathers' actions and advice serves as a buffer against negative influences from their peers and other members of society (Gordon et al., 2013).

Levant et al. (2018) note that fathers play a critical role in helping children break away from gender role stereotypes by adopting egalitarian behavior toward gender roles.

McMahon et al. (2019) highlight that previous research tended to focus on the role of mothers as the sole parental figure associated with cognitive development. However, as the authors note, paternal figures are also influential in the cognitive development of children. Su et al. (2017) support this view as they highlight the importance of father involvement in the cognitive development of children. Father involvement encourages the resilience of children toward everyday challenges while enhancing personal competence, alongside the acceptance of life and self. This is usually accompanied by the realization of self-worth and self-esteem. According to Dubeau et al. (2013), fathers contribute to cognitive development by interactively challenging children to be independent in solving various challenges in life. This enables the children to adjust to outcomes, conditions, and environments on their own, especially throughout of adolescence.

Father involvement in childhood plays an important role in the academic achievement of the child. This effect is evident from a tender age, with toddlers beginning their educational path with a higher level of readiness and achievement when fathers are present (McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017). This may be due to fathers' role in instilling the value of education while the children are young (Gordon et al., 2013). This emphasis on education by fathers serves to motivate the children toward high goals of academic achievement. Fathers' encouragement of their children to perform well in school and attendance of school functions motivates the child to perform well

academically (Adkison et al., 2016). Su et al. (2017) note that adolescents also exhibit higher academic achievement when fathers are involved. The higher academic achievement may be due to higher IQ performance associated with the cognitive development related to father involvement in early childhood (Pouget et al., 2011).

According to Adkison et al. (2016), one of the primary roles of fathers is enforcing discipline. This enables the children to develop a firm perception of right and wrong behavior, as a form of preventative guidance. Moreover, the discipline serves to enforce honesty and respect from the children. The fathers accomplish this by establishing rules alongside responsibilities within the household. According to Dubeau et al. (2013), the discipline instilled by fathers in their children serves to enhance the competence of children in both the academic and social setting. McCord and McCord (1958) highlight that the instilled discipline serves as a mediator between the values held by the parental figure and the learned behavior of the children, hence serves as an important factor in childhood development and well-being.

Negative Influences

According to Schneider (2017), the father-absence causes the child to live in a single mother familial setting, which increases the likelihood of child maltreatment. The maltreatment entails dangerous practices such as child neglect, physical or emotional harm, and sexual abuse. In contrast, the author highlights that the involvement of biological fathers may help buffer the behavioral and socioeconomic risk factors that contribute to the maltreatment in a single mother setting. Adkison et al. (2016), provide insight into the issue, that the maltreatment may arise from the single mother

overcompensating on the discipline and punishment, which would otherwise be less severe if the father figure were available. According to Fitzsimmons and Villadsen (2019), the mother's mental health may be affected by the absence of the child's father, which contributes to child maltreatment.

According to Coakley (2013), growing without a father figure negatively impacts the psychological health of children. Fitzsimmons and Villadsen (2019), highlight that the mental health effects are not limited to early childhood, but may also affect adolescents following with the theory of the critical period model of life. Pougnet et al. (2011) note that father-absence promotes internalizing problems in children, which induces mental issues such as anxiety and lower cognitive development. Nierengarten (2019) gives an example of hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) as a mental condition that may affect children due to father-absence. The absence of fathers also contributes to self-esteem issues, which further contributes to the poor mental health of the child (Su et al., 2017).

Pougnet et al. (2012) note that the absence of fathers tends to result in negative behavior patterns such as anger, jealousy, and criticism. Additionally, children have problems with interpersonal relationships (Fitzsimons & Villadsen, 2019). The authors highlight that as per the social learning theory, the affected children are unable to understand the distinction of roles in relationships, due to lack of the fathers' influence. Pitsoane and Gasa (2018), note that the behavioral problems may stem from emotional stress induced by the strained paternal relationships. The negative behavior can also manifest in the form of aggression and substance abuse (Coakley, 2013). Pougnet et al.

(2012) note that this aggression is more apparent among the children's peers, while McCord and McCord (1958) note that aggression may lean toward criminal activity as a means of coping with the father's rejection. Substance abuse can develop into a disorder, which may contribute to the relationship problems and antisocial temperaments. The most common substances abused are alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes. The aggression and substance abuse place the children at risk of juvenile detention, which further disrupts their childhood development.

Income is an important aspect of consideration in the well-being and development of a child. Fitzsimons and Villadsen, (2019) state that paternal departure results in a sizeable reduction of the family's income. Pougnet et al. (2011) also note that the absence of a parent is likely to lower the family's income level. In return, the mother may be unable to avail of all the resources necessary for providing an optimal environment for the proper development of the child. According to Coakley (2013), children faced with paternal abandonment are more likely to be affected by poverty and low living standards, which is likely to impede their proper development. If the income is greatly affected, the family may be forced to move, thereby disrupting peer relationships and schooling (Fitzsimons & Villadsen, 2019). The absence of fathers may result in school dropout and lower educational outcomes (Coakley, 2013; McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017; Pougnet et al., 2011). According to Gordon et al., (2013), fathers contribute significantly to instilling the importance of education, without which children may not properly value the educational process.

Montare (1980) notes that the strong feminine identifications in a male child living in a father-absent residence have significantly lower aggressive behaviors than males with both parental figures. This however could lead to situations where the male child tends to overcompensate to rebel against the feminine identification natured through the relationship with the mother. The use of overcompensation as a defense mechanism against the feminist intuition could result in various forms of exaggerated masculine behavior which are often displeasing hence normal social relationships often become challenging to maintain (Boone, 1980). The victims tend to become verbally or physically aggressive to suppress the inferiority of the masculinity they deal with (Mackey & Coney, 2000). Father-absent boys rely on this compensatory masculinity as a reaction to their masculine-identification which is often more inferior than that of other boys. Neshteruk et al. (2017) state that physical activity is an important aspect of childhood development, that is greatly influenced by the family environment. According to the authors, fathers are greatly involved in the physical activity of children, to a greater extent than mothers. Moreover, fathers tend to encourage their children and support their children in physical activity. This is an important aspect of combating obesity risk among children while promoting musculoskeletal and cardiometabolic health. Nierengarten (2019) highlights that fathers uniquely contribute to childhood development by physical engagement with the child than the mother, citing an example of “rough and tumble” play. In turn, this promotes risk-taking alongside problem-solving behavior. Additionally, physical activity also assists children in learning about decision-making and resilience in amped-up situations (Mackey & Coney, 2000).

Disruption of sex-typed behaviors in boys is much affected if a child is separated from the father figure early in their lives as compared to late separation where the identification process is complete or well underway. Sex-typed behaviors may be disrupted in the long-term if a father separates during the first four years before a child establishes a certain identification with certain sex (Hetherington, 1966; Stevenson & Black, 1988). It is believed that most male children develop strong feminine characteristics in their personalities in the absence of a father figure. As suggested by Burton and Whiting (1960), father-absent male children would relatively behave in a feminine manner as compared to male children with fathers. It was also noted that they naturally lack the motivation to participate in competitive activities. A smaller percentage of boys from tranquil homes are strongly and moderately active and outgoing as compared to a higher percentage of boys from broken homes (Burton & Whiting, 1960).

D'andrade (1973) hypothesized that in households where there is a lack of the father figure and a mother conducts the duty of a parent, the child will be most likely motivated to identify with the mother. Father parental absence in the early years of a child's development increases the chances of a strong bond and identification with the mother figure as compared to the absence of a parent later in the child's life. Boy children identify with the feminine aspects imitated throughout their early lives through identification with the mother. This conditioning later affects the male child's characters because their feminine upbringing collides with the masculine identity set by the society and culture surrounding them. This may result in the development of a masculinity identity which is protest driven. Children with no fathers usually show fewer tendencies

of being dependent on other adults. The cause of this could be the mistrust created toward adults due to the upbringing without a father figure. This consequently results in them having a dependency toward on peers (Hetherington, 1966). This was seen to occur on children who have lost their fathers. Such children have few emotional ties to the adult figures in their lives while exhibiting strong ties toward their peers (Hetherington, 1966).

Feelings of shame and low self-esteem are a problematic experience that most abandoned children go through (Beatty, 1995). Stigma, shame, and spitefulness are experiences likely to be associated with the state of being abandoned. It deters the ability to express emotions in most men due to poor communication skills (Balcom, 1998). Emotional expression is often shamed in male gender socialization hence young men grow up learning how to not show their emotions such as fear or sadness. The feeling of shame and low self-worth takes a toll on the mental well-being of most men under this situation. They exhibit poor peer adjustment compared to their mates. Encouraging men to be expressive of their emotions in a wider range can be useful in re-socializing men and helping out in many relationships within their families and other people.

As suggested by (Balcom, 1998), most men who grow without fathers have difficulties choosing their partners and sustaining a relationship. They also struggle later on raising their children, thus, most of them often seek treatment for and help with their relationships at various transition points for family development. The birth of a first child, especially a son, proves to be a profound transition point for men who grew up without a father. Parenting becomes an overwhelming task by itself due to the lack of support of a father figure of their own. It affects how they nature their children, in most

cases a lot of men being overprotective and having overboard expectations of the abilities of their children.

Father-separated boys have tendencies of being sexually anxious as they have a hard time expressing their desires and having a common ground in most intimate situations (Jones et al., 2003). Concerns over having normal sexual relations and insecurities about their sexual adequacy are often expressed. They may also struggle with depression at certain points of maturity as their social-emotional development is affected and, in most cases, it persists into adolescence. Father-absence increases the chances of an adolescent child engaging in risky behavior such as drug and substance abuse or early unwanted childbearing in cases of girls (Cronk et al., 2004). Research also suggests that the absence of fathers harms the productivity of a child in school as their educational attainment may be affected by the increase of behavior problems as the child matures (Gordon, Nichter & Henriksen, 2013). By being less self-controlled and more impulsive, father-absent boys are associated with various forms of social maladjustments. They are less likely to delay immediate gratification from other people as compared to father-present boys (Hetherington, 1966).

Covell (1982) states that social-economic status is a major consideration when looking into the effects of father absence on children. There are also major differences between the characters of boys who have been early separated and those who have experienced late separation from their fathers. This is based on the measures of their social interaction, self-esteem, and self-confidence. High self-esteem often found lacking

among children with divorced parents (Beaty, 1995). Middle-class and low-class families are more often to have broken homes and single parents.

According to Hammond et al (2011), paternal substance abuse, violence, and criminal activity limit the possible positive outcomes that fathers have on the child's well-being and development. For instance, Magnus and Benoit (2017) note that 'street masculinity' is a threat to the ideals that fatherhood is supposed to perpetuate, induced by conditions such as crime, poverty, race, colonization, and social exclusion. It is also possible for fathers to induce instability in the familial setting through domestic violence, domestic abuse, and substance abuse, which further undermines the benefits associated with father involvement (Mackey & Coney, 2000). Pougnet et al. (2011), highlight that fathers may induce conflict in the family, resulting in an unstimulating and unstable environment which that threatens the proper behavioral functioning and cognitive development of the child. Nierengarten, (2019), notes that the father may also affect childhood development via paternal postnatal depression, which creates a less than ideal environment for family stability and father-child bonding.

It should be noted that in addition to the negative effects highlighted above, lack of father involvement results in the loss of the benefits highlighted previously in association with father involvement. Additionally, it is worth considering that the effects of involvement or abandonment may not be necessarily limited to the childhood stage of the affected individuals. For instance, the life course theory's accumulation model dictates that various exposures accumulate to cause long-term or life-long effects (Fitzsimons & Villadsen, 2019). A specific example is offered by Levant et al (2018)

highlighting those feelings of self-worth and self-esteem instilled through paternal involvement or lack of it thereof, may persist into adulthood.

Summary

The involvement of fathers results in numerous positive effects on the well-being and development of children, which heavily outweighs the possible negative outcomes. From a contrapositive approach, the absence of fathers results in numerous negative effects on children. This helps put into perspective the need for integration of fathers in the lives of their children while educating the fathers on the possible outcomes and repercussions of their involvement and absence respectively. The key areas which were focused upon in this chapter include the reasons for the father's absence, the father's influence on the development and well-being of the children.

Reasons for the father's absence that were discussed include divorce, inability to meet financial responsibilities, immigration policies, incarceration, denied and unknown paternity, father's own experience of being fathered, and premature death. Both the positive and negative influence of the father on the development and well-being of the children were also discussed. Existing literature provided a better perspective into the existing gap in research and what needs to be done to fill the gap.

The literature review section above provides an in-depth look into the topic of research, with particular interest being in the different themes that are of extreme relevance to this study. The themes discussed above paint a clear picture of the expected outcomes of research depending on what existing literature has so far shown to be salient in the social relations discussed therein. As a result, the literature forms the theoretical

basis upon which the following research activities will be conducted and sets precedence on how and what questions I should ask to fill the identified gap that is existent in literature.

Furthermore, it was important that I did not fall into the temptation of being biased by existing literature to try and dictate what the answers or responses should be received by the participants. As a result, the review of literature should only be used as a source of theoretical foundation on the topic of discussion to identify what is there, what is lacking, and as such identify the rights questions that need be asked to fill the identified gap in research. In doing so, the next chapter will provide the research methodology used for data collection and analysis to gain useful information to fill the identified gap that exists in prior research.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of paternally abandoned Black fathers, throughout the ages of 25-35, living in an Eastern U.S. metropolitan area, and their experience in raising and disciplining their male offspring. This study sought to understand how the past experiences of Black fathers regarding paternal abandonment may affect their relationship with their male offspring. This study followed a phenomenological qualitative research design to achieve its purpose. This chapter will outline the procedures that I followed to collect and analyze the data which will be discussed alongside the instruments used for data collection and analysis. Precisely, this section will provide details on participant selection procedure, instrumentation, the data collection and analysis process, issues of trustworthiness, and the ethical procedures that were used in my study.

Research Design and Rationale

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do paternally abandoned Black fathers describe the lived experiences of raising and disciplining their male offspring?

Research Question 2: How does having male offspring influence these fathers' views on fatherhood?

Research Question 3: How do these Black fathers describe the experience of paternal abandonment?

Paternally abandoned Black fathers' past experiences have an impact on the way they raise their children, especially their male offspring (East et al., 2017). To make an in-depth inquiry into the lived experiences of paternally abandoned Black fathers alongside their experiences in disciplining their male offspring, a qualitative phenomenological research design was employed. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), the phenomenological approach is useful in that it enriches the qualitative design by exploring the phenomenon through the narratives of the lived experiences of the participants. Phenomenology emphasizes first-hand involvement of the participants and the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Role of the Researcher

To collect data regarding lived experiences, respondents must provide detailed information about their personal lives (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). In an effort to draw as much information from the participants as possible, I worked to form and cultivate close personal relationships with each of the participants. I began the study with an understanding that family matters may be sensitive, with some people feeling difficulty sharing such intimate information with strangers. For this reason, I used empathy in interviewing the respondents to make them feel more at ease to tell their experiences, as suggested by Fink (2000). Additionally, the respondents entrusted me with whatever sensitive information they choose to share, and in turn, I assured the respondents that their information was secure and will be used only for purposes of research. I will uphold the informed consent given to the participants by ensuring that the participants remain anonymous throughout data collection and reporting. Further, it will remain my

obligation to protect the participants' data from getting into the possession of any other third parties. Finally, I worked to reduce personal bias by using open-ended questions during data collection and maintaining a neutral stance during data analysis.

Participant Selection Logic

The population for this study was Black fathers, ages 25-35, who resided in the Eastern U.S. metropolitan area. The participants had been abandoned by their fathers in their early years of life so that their upbringing was without a father figure. The participants were fathers raising at least one biological son. I examined their lived experience of raising and disciplining their male offspring and the effect on the father/son relationship.

To accurately and comprehensively address the research questions, I selected an appropriate sample from the population. For this reason, the sampling strategy that was used to select the participants for my study was purposive sampling. Patten and Newhart (2017), confirm that a purposive sampling strategy assist me to apply individual judgment and knowledge to select the most appropriate participants for my study.

Through the employment of purposive sampling, sourcing and recruiting through approved social media platforms, five paternally abandoned Black fathers, throughout the ages of 25-35, with a history of behavioral health issues, were chosen to participate in semi-structured interviews in order gain understanding of their lived experiences. The interviews were conducted via Zoom web-call technology, due to the restrictions brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic, to employ the greatest chance for empathetic, deeply personal responses as well as the ability to seize upon non-verbal cues and other objective

characteristics in the transcription, content analysis, and coding process. It was my goal to witness commonalities and themes through the coding and content analysis process to accurately depict the shared experiences of the participants.

Through purposive sampling, more specifically, extreme case sampling, a qualitative phenomenological approach aligned well with the purpose of this study. Through utilizing in-depth interviews, a better understanding of how those with different parental upbringing and circumstances, especially those who've experienced childhood abandonment, can be thoroughly physically, mentally, and emotionally supported within society (Austin et al., 2009; Castillo et al., 2011; Patton, 2015). In choosing five paternally abandoned Black fathers who fit into the inclusion criteria of being between the ages of 25-35, with a history of behavioral issues and at least one male offspring, engagement in in-depth interviews, designed to allow the participants to fully share their lived experiences and yielded a better understanding of this occurrence. The interviews, conducted via a Zoom video call technology, due to the public safety measures of the COVID-19 pandemic, aided my ability to confirm the inclusion criteria of the participants, as well as allowed for an open and comfortable setting to facilitate a more intimate interview. While Zoom video call technology was utilized, I only recorded the interviews via audio. Then, through utilizing content analysis, I transcribed and coded the one-on-one interviews, interpreting my primary data that contributed to a conclusion.

All potential participants met certain criteria to be considered for my study. First, participants were men of Black/African-American descent. Second, the participants were abandoned by their father at an early age in their upbringing, with a history of behavioral

problems (e.g. anxiety, depression, anger issues). Third, the participants were biological fathers to at least one male child and actively participating in raising the child. Fourth, participants must have become a father between the ages of 25 and 35. Fifth, participants lived in an Eastern U.S. metropolitan area. Finally, the participants were fluent in the English language.

I recruited a total of five participants to my study as this number was feasible for the resources available for conducting my research study. The participants were asked questions and required to give exhaustive responses to reach a saturation point. Since I sought to obtain in-depth information from the participants, it was logical that a small sample of participants was used. A large sample, on the other hand, may have hindered my collection of in-depth information as I would of have limited opportunity to form personal relationships and understand each of the respondents (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

I recruited participants through social media, specifically Facebook in targeting groups that were likely to consist of members meeting the inclusion criteria (primarily the groups entitled “In the Absence of a Father,” “Black Fathers,” “Fathers of Black Sons,” “Black Fathers & Co.,” and “Black Fathers Uncensored”). Having established the criteria of participant selection, I placed banner ads on the aforementioned Facebook groups across the Eastern U.S. metropolitan area to call upon potential participants. I chose Facebook as a viable method of recruiting participants as it provided a purposive sample of ideal participants. I then contacted interested participants via email and vetted them for eligibility in order to narrow down the number to the five who were to be interviewed.

Instrumentation

Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection instrument for this study. The semi-structured interviews were meant to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of paternally abandoned Black fathers in raising and disciplining their male offspring, from their accounts, in a manner that will answer the research questions. I used a total of 10 open-ended questions as the basis of the interview. Fully structured interviews were not ideal for a qualitative study of this nature as they can lead to the collection of quantifiable data that does not provide a clear picture of the phenomenon under research. Creswell and Poth (2016) note that semi-structured interviews may offer flexibility for the researcher to ask for elaborations on the responses provided by the interviewee which enables a greater understanding of the themes entailed in the topic of research.

The interview questions were designed to explore the current state of affairs regarding abandoned Black fathers' relationships with their male offspring, especially in as far as raising and disciplining was concerned. Furthermore, my interview questions were meant to gain understanding into how behavioral problems developed by parents, due to father abandonment, influenced their fathering and child-rearing behaviors. My interview questions were structured to contain six elements including opening, probing, specifying, interpreting, follow-up, and closing (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). With this structure, I was able to solicit information from the participants regarding their perception of the situation, what the situation means to them, and how it came to be. The opening element intended to connect the interviewee and I by asking questions about their

background and also allowed me to develop a personal relationship with the participant. I also structured the questions to probe the participant to give detailed information about their experiences by asking them to expound on some of the responses with scanty information. Additionally, questions required participants to give specific information where necessary and to interpret culture-specific information that may not be understood by the general population. I also used follow-up questions alongside the main interview questions to obtain more information depending on how each participant responded to the main interview question (Creswell & Poth, 2016). I used the closing element to wind down the interview and elicit a feeling of empowerment in having participated in my study (Jacob & Furgerson 2012). Importantly, I played a significant role in ensuring that all these elements of the interview questions were properly utilized during the interview session.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted, as it was necessary to ensure that the interview protocol was efficient to collect accurate data from the participants. According to Turner (2010), a pilot study can aid me in identifying and fix flaws and ambiguity in the interview design. In the pilot study, I recruited two of the participants from Facebook groups focused on paternal abandonment amongst Black men (primarily the groups entitled “In the Absence of a Father,” “Black Fathers,” “Fathers of Black Sons,” “Black Fathers & Co.,” and “Black Fathers Uncensored”) and scheduled a virtual interview with each to test the interview protocol and questions (Appendix A). The pilot study was important in that it helped me to identify the approximate time each interview would take

and also ensure that the interview questions were clear and straightforward. After the pilot study, I discovered and adjusted to, minor flaws in the interview questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I posted ads on various Facebook groups across the Eastern United States metropolitan area that described the types of participants sought and requested their participation and/or asking others to refer potential participants to me in order to gather a pool of potential participants (Appendix B). From the large group obtained by banner ads, I employed purposive sampling using the established criteria to narrow down the participants to the desired number as purposeful sampling is a more aligned approach used when participants are sought based on a preselected criteria.

I chose the final participants by selecting those who most closely aligned with the inclusion criteria. I then requested the email addresses of the final five participants to send them the invitation email alongside the consent forms. Participants were given a period of 3 days to read, complete, and return the consent forms as a way of showing their willingness to participate in my study. A pilot study was then conducted with two of the participants, chosen at random, to ensure that the interview questions were clear and unambiguous.

After the pilot study, I proceeded to set the date for the actual interviews with each of the participating parties based on their availability (Turner, 2010). Interviews were conducted on Zoom video call due to the public safety measures of the COVID-19 pandemic, with only the interviewer and the interviewee present to ensure privacy and confidentiality (Jacob & Furgerson 2012). While I conducted the interviews via Zoom

video call, I only audio recorded the calls. During the interviews, I was guided by ten flexible interview questions to establish a dialogue with the participant (Jacob & Furgerson 2012; Mason, 2010). To collect in-depth information from participants, I used probing follow-up questions and comments to supplement the inquiries of the interview questions (Fink, 2000). To keep the interviews focused, interview times ranged from 30 to 60 minutes (Jacob & Furgerson 2012). The sessions were audio-recorded after asking permission from each of the participants.

Data Collection

In seeking in-depth examination of the gathered data, semi-structured interviews are presented as the primary method of data collection in this research study (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Creswell and Poth (2016) note that semi-structured interviews are an effective way of collecting qualitative data as it offers the most reliable means of diagnosis of the information that has been solicited from the participants of my study. However, Creswell and Poth (2016) do contend that for one to conduct semi-structured interviews within the context of a study, there are time constraints that may be experienced as the process may be time-consuming. The semi-structured interviews, in this case, were conducted through video call due to the existing safety measures against public meetings to stop the spread of COVID-19 and prevent the pandemic from worsening.

The semi-structured interviews conducted via video call were audio recorded only once the call started until its end. I also took notes of the participant's responses to the questions asked therein. The purpose of the data collection process was to ensure that I

gained as much information of a subjective nature as possible in order to provide a clear reflection of the participants issues from the perspective of the chosen topic of research. The data collection process entailed the use of a laptop to conduct the video call, and a pen and notebook to take notes of the responses and salient issues discussed in the interview that were discussed throughout the interview process.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis process began by producing verbatim transcripts of the audio-recordings (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Additionally, the notes taken during the interview sessions were used alongside the transcribed data. The transcribed text were sent back to the participants to verify the accuracy of the information they gave me as a way of upholding credibility (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006).

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data (Saldana, 2015; Turner, 2010). Open coding was used to come up with the themes and sub-themes (Saldana, 2015). In qualitative research, open coding is used to produce meaningful information by examining different participants' narratives and bringing similar characteristics of the narratives together (Saldana, 2015). I created the starter codes during the research process by labeling concepts and then defining categories of data based on their properties (Saldana, 2015). The starter codes that were be used in the research were derived from previous studies that are relevant to the topic of research. Through the use of manual coding, deductive coding ensured that the starter codes, which are a predetermined set of codes, were assigned to the qualitative data that was collected in the research.

The starter codes, which came from previous research, were aligned to the themes that were focused upon in this study. Saldana (2015) notes that the use of starter codes from previous studies and aligning them to the qualitative data in question provides a concept-driven approach in coding. As such, the starter codes helped to guarantee that the specific areas of interest in the research were coded and saved time for me to create new codes. However, Patton (2015) advises that caution must exist in this process of coding as it may create bias in the researcher as to what the responses provided by the participants would be. Moreover, it is important that I do not fully rely on the starter codes and end up missing important themes that may arise throughout my study by focusing too hard on the proving of my study's hypothesis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The first stage of open coding involved building the concepts (Saldana, 2015). This process was achieved by going through the transcribed data to familiarize with it and break it down into smaller parts to make comparisons and contrasts (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006; Saldana, 2015). In this stage, I labeled sections of texts with different color codes for identification. Different ways in which fathers discipline their children were identified and given codes (Saldana, 2015). Additionally, reported fathers' views on fatherhood and experiences of paternal abandonment were given unique codes (Saldana, 2015). After building the concepts, I proceeded to abstract the concepts. In this stage, common properties arising from the codes were checked and grouped into categories that produced the final themes from the data (Saldana, 2015). The themes were discussed in a write up that will also connect sub-themes to the main themes and expound on them exhaustively (Saldana, 2015). According to Saldana (2015), coding should only consider

data that was relevant to the research questions, otherwise irrelevant information given by participants was reported in the discrepant cases.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility establishes the trustworthiness of particular research by determining the truth of the research findings by linking it with reality (Cope, 2014). In other words, credibility seeks to check whether the original data given by the participants match the researcher's interpretation that led to the findings as reported in a particular study. As such, it is the most important element when addressing trustworthiness issues of research. The credibility of this study was established using reflexivity, saturation, member check, and triangulation methods (Patnaik, 2013). Reflexivity is achieved when the researcher distances themselves from personal beliefs, judgment, or prior knowledge of the research subject that may influence the research (Patnaik, 2013). To avoid reflexivity, I used a reflexive journal where I noted how I may have influenced the responses while interviewing each participant. I then used it to inform the participants of the possible objectivity in data interpretation (Patnaik, 2013). In establishing a member check, I sent the interview transcripts back to the participants via email, to verify whether the information contained is consistent with what they provided during the interviews. Regarding saturation, I asked probing questions to ensure that interviewers give as much detail as possible to answer all the research questions comprehensively (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Transferability is the extent to which research findings can be applied in contexts other than the original one and is achieved when the researcher uses thick description

techniques (Connelly, 2016). I gave a detailed account of data collection experiences that link with the socio-cultural context of the research setting (Connelly, 2016). Therefore, details about where the interview occurred, the number of participants, the sampling strategy, and instrumentation was provided.

Dependability is the degree to which study findings are consistent and repeatable (Farrelly, 2013). It, therefore, establishes how well research can be traced by looking over the data used to arrive at similar conclusions as originally reported. According to Farrelly (2013), dependability implies that other researchers can follow up research and arrive at similar findings because it is logical, traceable, and well documented. To ascertain the dependability of this study, I called upon an external researcher from the researchers' cohort to examine the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Farrelly, 2013). The external researcher should confirm that the data collected accurately supports the findings to ascertain the dependability of the research.

Confirmability relates to how well the study findings are shaped by the participants' accounts rather than a biased researcher (Farrelly, 2013). This research used reflexivity to ensure confirmability. I considered their own background and knowledge about the topic to see if there was any influence on the research process (Farrelly, 2013). I then kept and updated a reflexive journal throughout the research process to keep the potential biases accounted for (Patnaik, 2013).

Ethical Procedures

This research was conducted in conformity with the ethical considerations for undertaking research that involves human participants. Ethical issues for this study

included informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, privacy, and data protection. The first step was to seek institutional approval to undertake my study by obtaining written permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University. The outline of the research proposal and proposed methods of data collection was issued to the IRB to ascertain their adherence to ethical standards and consequently seek approval to proceed with data collection.

Once the IRB approved the research, recruitment of participants began. I issued a consent form to all participants as a requirement to show they were made aware of all the research details before being allowed to participate. The informed consent provided details about the research purpose, data collection procedures, and any risks the participants will be exposed to should they agree to participate (Connelly, 2014). Further, the informed consent outlined the principle of respect for autonomy whereby the participants were informed about the voluntary nature of participation in my study. Precisely, the informed consent informed the participants that they are allowed to willingly take part in my study, or to decline participation in my study, or to withdraw from my study at any time they so wish without having to suffer any consequences (Nijhawan et al., 2013).

Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was upheld throughout the research process by assigning random initial and numerical identification to the participants. During data collection, participants were not be required to provide their names or any personal identification detail when responding to the interview questions. Similarly, no personal identifying information was revealed during the reporting phase of

the research. Moreover, I ensured all data from the respondents is safely stored away from access by third parties. During the interviews, only the interviewee and I were present at a time. The audio recordings were stored in password-protected flash disks while awaiting transcription. The laptop computer that was used to store data for the research was also protected by a password in which only I know the code. All the data for this research will be kept safely as they await to be permanently destroyed five years after the official submission of the research.

Summary

In this chapter, the research methods used to collect and analyze data to answer the research question have been explained. A discussion of the participant selection, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis revealed how participants were sourced, the materials that was used to obtain information from them, and how the information was interpreted to draw meaningful conclusions. The research questions were identified through consideration of the role of the researcher, use of purposive sampling, inclusion and exclusion criteria for potential participants, online recruitment methods, and the total number of participants targeted to be recruited for this study.

Semi-structured interviews were identified as the main data collection instruments, as they provided me with the ability to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experienced paternally abandoned Black fathers in raising and disciplining their male offspring, from their accounts, in a manner that answered the research questions (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Patten & Newhart, 2017). A total of ten open-ended questions were used as the basis of the interview. A pilot study was described as

necessary to my study as it aided in identifying salient flaws and ambiguity in the interview design.

The discussion of the data analysis plan pointed out that data collected from the semi-structured interviews was analyzed by the production of verbatim transcripts of the audio recordings and notes taken during the interview sessions. Thematic analysis was chosen as the main method of analyzing the collected data, where open coding was important to determine the important themes in qualitative research. The themes were discussed in a write up that also connected sub-themes to the main themes and expound on them exhaustively (Saldana, 2015). Further, the issues of trustworthiness were discussed together with the measures I intended to use to maintain readers' trust in my study. The next chapter will provide my study results built upon the methods outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Results

Introduction

My study explored the lived experiences of raising and disciplining male offspring among paternally abandoned Black fathers with a history of behavioral problems. My study sought to obtain a better understanding of how Black fathers' past experiences with paternal abandonment may affect their relationships with their male offspring. My study was performed using a qualitative design that was influenced by a phenomenological approach. Using the approach, my role in this study was that of facilitator and involved analysis and presentation of such results. Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection instrument for this study. The interviews involved the use of interview questions that explored the current state of affairs regarding paternally abandoned Black fathers' relationships with their male offspring, especially about aspects in which discipline is concerned. The protocol was piloted to ensure that the interview protocol is efficient to collect accurate data from the participants. Transcribed interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The results of the data analysis are presented in Chapter 4. Included in this chapter are the research questions, a description of my study demographics, the findings of the data collected and of themes that emerged from its analysis, and a summary of the chapter. The research questions that guided my study are as follows:

Research Question 1: How do paternally abandoned Black fathers describe the lived experiences of raising and disciplining their male offspring?

Research Question 2: How does having male offspring influence these fathers' views on fatherhood?

Research Question 3: How do these Black fathers describe the experience of paternal abandonment?

Demographic Data

My study included the participation of five paternally abandoned Black fathers. Given that only five participants took part in my study, each of the participants is described based on age, marital status, and/or the number of sons they have fathered. To protect the identity of the participants, they will be identified using pseudonyms.

Participant 1 (P1) was raised by foster parents. He indicated that he did not get to know his father until he was 21 years old and suspected that his father may have had six or seven different children. During the time of the interview, P1 was age 60 and had his first son at the age of 28 and his second at the age of 32. He lives with his wife.

Participant 2 (P2) was age 39 at the time of the interview; yet had his first son at the age of 34. He also did not get to meet his father, but he knew that his father had other children and other families. He had a 5-year-old boy and another who is 3 years old.

Participant 3 (P3), age 32 at the time of the interview, indicated that his parents separated when he was young due to his father's involvement in drugs. He first became a father when he was 26 years old. He only had one son, aged 6.

Participant 4's (P4) parents never married. His father had many relationships with several women over many years and he was against the idea of marriage. P4 had two boys aged 13 and 16 years old and was 43 at the time of the interview.

Participant 5 (P5), who was age 45 at the time of the interview, also indicated that his father abandoned his mother upon his conception and the two never met. P5 has one son, aged 12 years.

Description of the Emerging Themes

In this section I provide the outcome of the analysis of the five interviews. Thematic data analysis resulted in the identification of three themes (see Table 1). The three themes provided various insights into the issue of paternal abandonment and its effects on fatherhood among Black fathers. With the first theme of the experiences of paternally abandoned Black fathers I noted to have six subthemes. The second theme of the effects on parenting I noted to have five subthemes. The third theme of disciplining was not divided into subthemes. In this section, I describe each of the themes and the corresponding subthemes along with the supporting quotes from the participants.

Theme 1: Experiences of Abandonment

This theme describes the views of the participants regarding abandonment by their fathers. The subthemes include childhood experiences, neglect, challenges growing up, yearning for a father figure, resentment toward the missing father, and fractured self-esteem. I've described each of the subthemes below.

Subtheme 1a: Childhood Experiences. All five participants recalled childhood experiences of missing their father. The participants noted that they were not able to enjoy the company of a father figure while doing childhood activities such as attending sporting activities or other outings (P3). They indicated that they only had an encounter with a male figure later in their teenage years (P1, P4, and P5). P4 stated, "I knew of our

so-called foster father was the person that was supposed to be head of the household....I don't recall interaction with him, he died soon after I got there anyway." P3 stated, "One thing I didn't have with my father was to take me to sporting events, ya know, spend any meaningful time with me." P1 said,

I never really had a father...I really never had too much involvement with a male....I think the first involvement that I really had with a male figure that would even contribute to any part of my life, was, I was about 14....

P2 said,

He lived with us for a very short period of time...I was eight at this time, and my mom kicked him out because he tried to have sex with my sister who was 12 at the time...I never made any additional efforts to speak to them, to him after that....

Subtheme 1b: Neglect. The participants shared views that suggest they were neglected by their fathers. P1 recalled the terrible experience of knowing that he had been walking past his father's house unknowingly throughout his junior high years. P4 also recalled a heartbreaking experience of being neglected by his father. P1 said, "We used to walk past his house...we never knew that we were walking past his house in junior high school...I was actually 21... I got acknowledgement that my real father actually existed, and here's the terrible part of it..." P4 said,

It broke my heart. Even to this day, I never told my mom...I told [her] Hey, you know what, I don't wanna see him anymore, I'm okay.

Subtheme 1c: Challenges Growing Up. The participants recalled that growing up without a father affected them immensely. P1 said that the absence of his father

affected him in a bad way. P2 recalled that his childhood was filled with chaos and he would change from one school to another. P4 indicated that they grew up in poverty and there were not many positives that he could mention growing up. P1 said, “if you ask me years ago that it affected me, I would say yes... say around 12 or 13, I think that's when the first time I really realized that this really is affecting you in a bad way...” P2 stated,

Childhood was a lot of chaos...I think I've changed schools like nine different times... and I think I went to six different elementary schools and three different middle schools.

P4 said,

We were poor...wasn't advanced or had much really...and my childhood, wasn't much positive I could say of it.

Subtheme 1d: Yearning For A Father Figure. The participants indicated that they yearned for a father figure while they were growing up. Some participants indicated that encountering other families with fathers made them miss their fathers (P1, P2, P4, and P5). They indicated that they wanted to have a complete family (P1 and P5). The desire to have a father figure made some of the participants rely on older boys around them as role models for how to be a good man (P4). P4 indicated that older boys around him actually helped to start to become role models to help him to formulate what it meant to be a good man. P1 stated, “We kind of realized that we were different because we didn't have that father figure ...you see the other typical father and son, and the image of a family that that you envision and that you were...” P5 stated,

When you look in the book, this is an image of a family, the mother, the father, and may be a sister, a brother, when you don't have that, you think about those things and you look around again and you don't see it, so...

Subtheme 1e: Resentment Toward the Missing Father. The participants also indicated that the experiences of being abandoned by their fathers fostered a sense of resentment toward their fathers. P4 did not want to be likened to his father in any way, although there was physical resemblance with him. P2 indicated that he could not call his father “dad.” He felt that his father did not act like a dad. P4 viewed his father as a supreme narcissist. P1 stated, “I said, we don't look nothing like, I don't think we do, but people just say we do...after getting to know a little bit about him and the other things that he had been involved with, I figured, honestly, I was better off not having him in my life as a father because his moral value.” P2 stated,

I remember he said, well, why don't you ever call me dad? I said, well, if you act like a dad and I'll call your dad.

P4 stated,

My experience, my dad as a supreme narcissist, complete ego maniac, in my opinion, a distorted world view...

Subtheme 1f: Fractured Self-esteem. Some participants indicated that abandonment by their fathers led them to have low self-esteem. P4 indicated that he shied away from his friends due to what he perceived to be the absence of his dad to guide him. P1 indicated that he was looking for material things to cover for his fractured self-esteem.

P1 stated, “That's a burden that you carry your whole life, and I'm on...I'm gonna say you never...kinda never get over that.” P1 went on to say,

...it made me put more into looking at the materialistic side of things...especially as a child, again, I was... I was significantly affected by it, it does affect your self-esteem. P4 said,

I didn't deal with a lot of people, I had, I gonna say 2 or 3 max friends that I dealt with, because several things, we didn't have the same financial status and that weighs on you sometimes...

Theme 2: Effects on Parenting

The participants indicated that growing up without a father affected the way they approached parenting. The participants shared experiences that indicated both negative and positive effects. The subthemes include positive views on parenting, parenting motivated by fear of failure/overcompensating, parenting gaps, and breaking the cycle of paternal abandonment.

Subtheme 2a: Positive Effect on Parenting. Views shared by the participants indicated that missing their fathers during childhood was a significant factor in making them want to become better fathers. The participants indicated that they wanted to become role models for their children (P4 and P1). Some of the participants attended parenting classes and devoted themselves to seek education on how to be better parents (P5). P1 stated, “I wanted to parent my child.... wanted to present, I wanted to be a... To be a role model for my son, that was really big to me.” P4 stated,

It significantly affected me, me being a role model for my son made me not want to do any of the things that he did, I wanted to be completely opposite of him.

P5 said,

I read magazines, I took classes, parenting classes, I read a couple of books by a few renowned psychologists and things like that, because that became, in a sense...I became obsessed that I did not want to be like my father.

Subtheme 2b: Parenting Motivated by Fear of Failure and/or

Overcompensating. From the views shared by the participants, it emerged that the parenting approach taken by some of the participants was motivated by a fear of failing like their fathers. The participants indicated that they set high and sometimes unachievable parenting goals for themselves. The participants indicated that they were doing “too much” for their sons because they wanted them to have a better future and to leave a generational legacy. P5 stated, “I guess I set unachievable goals for myself... Well, because nobody's gonna be the perfect father... You're not gonna be the perfect parent, you have to discipline, you're gonna upset them, you're gonna make them mad, you're gonna say things that you wish... You wish you hadn't said... No, you have to give them the truth, even though sometimes the truth is going to hurt you actually, sometimes you can't help it.” P5 went on to say,

I overcompensate for what I didn't have at the same time as you know... Am I doing too much for my kids as I think about the future, I'm thinking about if I can set up investments enough so that after they graduate college, maybe I can buy them a house. I'm thinking generational legacy.

Subtheme 2c: Parenting Gaps. The participants indicated that they had parenting gaps. Participants linked the mistakes that they made as parents to the absence of a father in their life to teach them how to avoid shortcomings as a parent. It emerged that missing a father during childhood made the participants unable to deal with some of the challenges in marriage, as some even ended up divorcing. P5 stated, “I think if I would have had a father in my life, I think some of the mistakes that I made as a father, I would have either learned from him, through him. Possibly he could have mentored me and to sit back and say, hey, this is what I do for you.” P5 went on to say,

As far as the role model, that's something I'm honestly working through, coming out of a divorce, a divorce that was only about 13 months ago, so... I think the mentorship needs to occur with males and females at a much earlier level that... like a fifth-grade level. Because I found out in college that certain things that I thought were normal were not normal.

Subtheme 2d: Breaking the Cycle. The views shared by the participants suggested that some of them were successful in breaking the cycle of abandonment (P1, P2, P4, and P5). Some of the participants suggested that abandonment and absence of fathers in Black families was an issue that was complex and challenging to eradicate, as some felt the issue continues to be deeply embedded in the fabric of the society. Some participants indicated that it was a personal responsibility to end the cycle of abandonment and to provide better care for their families. P1 stated, “We cannot use the excuse of, I didn't have a father, that's the reason why I'm in jail, that's the reason why I'm not.” P4 stated,

We want to do best by our kids, and we wanna end the cycle.

P2 stated,

All that baggage from my childhood is probably what caused me to choose my wife, which in hindsight, I missed a lot of things. You might alienate someone close to you.

P5 stated,

The abandonment from a childhood definitely led me to reach into that, so it's gonna impact them if it hasn't already.

Theme 3: Disciplining

Views shared by the participants regarding the discipline of their sons were varied. The forms of disciplining that participants indicated that they used included taking things away from their sons, making them write a story, and spanking. Most of the participants viewed taking things away from their sons to be a successful approach to discipline. It emerged that some of the parents were cautious about disciplining their sons. Although some of the participants indicated that their disciplining approach was effective, they were sensitive to how their sons perceived them. Some of the participants did not want their sons to hate them. P3 stated, “I didn't want him to fall in a trap....So I held on to him too tight, but when I held on too tight, it was almost like I was suffocating him because I now wasn't allowing him to get just out here to do things.” P1 stated,

I believe that taking things away from you, that you truly love as a child, that gets your attention. The discipline was very, very, very effective. Very few times did you see him repeating the same infraction... very few times.

P4 stated,

Yeah, we would spank, but he looked at me and the look, I was just... You're terrorizing me, and that's a little hard to me, and I was like, I can't do this anymore.

P5 stated,

I wrestle with that and wrestle with the discipline versus our relationship. I know I have to discipline them, but I don't wanna disconnect the point to where they hate me as a father.

Addressing the Research Questions

This section describes how the presented outcome addresses the research questions. Each research question is identified along with the corresponding response.

Research Question 1: How do paternally abandoned black fathers describe the lived experiences of raising and disciplining their male offspring?

Findings presented in Theme 3 provide insights into how paternally abandoned black fathers describe the lived experiences of disciplining their male offspring. The fathers indicated that they struggled with concerns over the impact that disciplining would have on how their sons would view them. The concerns made them cautious about disciplining their sons. The fathers did not want their sons to hate them. They however noted that taking things away from their sons was a successful approach to discipline.

Research Question 2: How does having male offspring influence these fathers' views on fatherhood?

The findings presented in Theme 2 address the second research question. Concerning the influence that having male offspring has on fathers' views on fatherhood,

the outcome indicated that fathers wanted to give their sons good role models and to be better fathers. It also emerged that the parenting approach taken by some of the participants was motivated by fear of failing their sons as did their absentee fathers. The outcome also indicates that the desire of the abandoned fathers to provide a better childhood experience to their sons led them to set high and sometimes unachievable parenting goals.

Research Question 3: How do these black fathers describe the experience of paternal abandonment?

The findings presented in Theme 1 address the third research question. The views shared by the abandoned black fathers provide insights into the experience of paternal abandonment. They indicated that they were not able to enjoy the company of a father figure in childhood activities such as attending sporting events or other outings and only had an encounter with a male figure later in their teenage years. They recalled the terrible and heartbreaking experience of being neglected. The fathers indicated that they experienced poverty, low self-esteem, and a chaos-filled childhood. They also missed a father figure and role models as they developed and ended-up cultivating resentment toward their fathers.

Summary

This chapter has presented the results of the thematic analysis of data obtained from a qualitative phenomenological study that involved five paternally abandoned black fathers. The outcome provides insights into the lived experiences of raising and disciplining male offspring among paternally abandoned black fathers with a history of

behavioral problems. Three themes emerged from the analysis with additional sub-themes that aided in providing answers to the stated research questions. Findings presented in Theme 3 offer insights into research question one on how paternally abandoned black fathers describe the lived experiences of disciplining their male offspring. The findings presented in Theme 2 address the second research question. The findings presented in Theme 1 address the third research question. In the subsequent chapter, the described findings are discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

My research addressed the lived experiences of raising and disciplining male offspring among paternally abandoned Black fathers with a history of behavioral problems. My study sought to obtain a better understanding of how black fathers' past experiences with paternal abandonment may affect their relationships with their male offspring. My study was performed using a qualitative design that was guided by a phenomenological approach. The semi-structured interviews I obtained were transcribed and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach.

Three themes emerged from the analysis of semi-structured interviews of five paternally abandoned Black fathers that aided answering my research questions. Concerning research question 1, theme 3 provided insights into how paternally abandoned black fathers describe the lived experiences of raising and disciplining their male offspring. Views shared by the fathers indicated that they had concerns over the likelihood of their sons hating them as a result of disciplining, which made them adopt a cautious approach to discipline.

The findings presented in theme 2 addressed the second research question regarding the influence that having male offspring has on fathers' views on fatherhood. I noted that fatherhood was motivated by fear of failing their sons as did their fathers. The need to provide a better childhood experience to their sons led abandoned fathers to set high and sometimes unachievable parenting goals. My findings presented in theme 1 address the third research question regarding the experience of paternal abandonment.

The outcome indicated that the fathers did not experience the company of a father figure during childhood. The participants recalled their terrible and heartbreaking experiences of neglect, poverty, low-self-esteem, and chaos in childhood.

In this chapter, my findings are discussed based on the existing relevant evidence. The discussion highlights areas where my findings agree or disagree with the existing research. The limitations of my study are also identified and the recommendation for future research is discussed. The implications of my findings are also described and the chapter concludes with the overall conclusion, which describes how my study's purpose was achieved.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this section, my findings are interpreted by critically analyzing how they compared with existing literature. The discussion provides areas where my findings agree or disagree with existing literature. The discussion of the findings in this section is organized based on the research questions.

The outcome of my study provides insights into how paternally abandoned Black fathers describe the lived experiences of raising and disciplining their male offspring. The findings support the views shared by Adkison et al. (2016) regarding the role of fathers in enforcing discipline as a means of enabling the sons to develop a firm perception of right and wrong behavior. Although Adkison et al. (2016) were referring to mothers overcompensating on the discipline and punishment, my study noted that abandoned fathers also tend to overcompensate on the discipline. According to this study, the overcompensation on discipline by abandoned fathers is driven by fear of failing to

provide the required parenting need to shape the child in the right ways. My study provides new insights into the cautious approach taken by the abandoned fathers when disciplining their sons because they did not want their sons to hate them. My observation that the abandoned fathers struggled with concerns over the impact that disciplining would have on how their sons viewed them could also be associated with attempts to overcompensate for the need for a good relationship with their male offspring, which they missed during childhood. However, some participants noted that taking things away from their sons was a successful approach to discipline.

I discovered that having male offspring influenced abandoned fathers' views on fatherhood. From the views shared by the abandoned fathers, it was evident that they missed their father's input and teachings on how to raise their families later in life. The findings that indicated that abandoned fathers wanted to give their sons good role models and to be better fathers contradict Elliot's (2010) assertions that father-absence in raising children results in them having weak perceptions of father involvement. It should further be noted that although some of the participants' marriage ended up in divorce, they still indicated that they were actively involved in the upbringing of their sons.

This study provides an important addition to literature with respect to what motivates the abandoned fathers to be better parents to their male offspring and end the cycle of abandonment. It also emerged that the parenting approach taken by some of the participants was motivated by fear of failing their sons as did their fathers. The outcome also indicates that the desire of the abandoned fathers to provide a better childhood experience to their sons led them to set high and sometimes unachievable parenting goals.

The outcome of my study also provides insights into the experiences of paternal abandonment among abandoned Black fathers. Based on the outcome of my study, experiences of abandonment were associated with divorce, unknown paternity, and denial, which corroborates the observations made by previous researchers (Mather 2010; Nduna & Manyatshe, 2014). This study supports the existing literature regarding the adverse psychological effects associated with experiences of abandonment by the fathers (Eliot, 2010; Nduna & Manyatshe, 2014). As reported in this study, abandoned fathers indicated that they experienced poverty, low self-esteem, and a chaos-filled childhood. Some of the participants indicated that they were undisciplined during their childhood, which could be a result of maladaptive coping strategies associated with abandonment. My study noted that the fathers recalled the terrible and heartbreaking experience of being neglected, which corroborates the observations made by Ellis et al. (2013) that indicated that children abandoned by their fathers have less enjoyable childhoods.

The abandoned fathers indicated that they were not able to experience the company of a father when engaging in childhood activities such as sporting events, which is an indication of the important role that fathers play in the social development of their sons. My observations made in this study where the abandoned fathers expressed experiences of not being able to socialize with their peers, provide insights into the important role that fathers play in the development of pro-social behavior and their children. The abandoned fathers indicated that they had to look up to other men as role models since they missed their fathers (Nierengarten, 2019). They also missed a father figure and role models and ended up developing resentment toward their fathers. The

reported negative behavior toward the absent father was previously reported by Pougnet et al. (2012).

Limitations of the Study

Various limitations need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings of this study. One of the limitations of my study is the use of self-reported data. My study relied on interviews where the participants recalled their specific experiences. Self-reported data subjects my study to possible recall bias, which could happen due to the failure of the participants to recall actual experiences. The other limitation is the use of a small sample size, which limited the generalizability of the findings. The issue with the sample size of five participants is evident in this study since the participants had sons of different age groups which limited the drawing of conclusive and generalizable insights.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the highlighted limitations, future researchers would benefit from adopting research design approaches that enable them to target fathers with sons within specific age groups to support comparisons of the Black father's experiences and development of substantive outcomes throughout stages in the child's lifespan. Future research could also be explored in examining the lived experiences of paternally abandoned Black fathers who are raising daughters, both throughout a broad age range and specific stages of the child's development, evolving into a longitudinal study, examining the lived experiences over an extended period.

In future research, a study can expand further in not just exploring the lived experiences of paternally abandoned Black fathers raising their offspring but doing so in a single-parent household as well, where the biological mother is absent from the offspring's life, adding the single parent dynamic to the lived occurrence. More research could also be conducted in gathering the perspective of those in a smaller social circle to the abandoned Black father (i.e., the father's spouse or mother to their child) to gain insight into the co-parenting aspect of co-parenting with a paternally abandoned Black man and the effect, if any, on parenting and the relationship.

In all variations of future research, it is my recommendation to magnify the sample size to enhance the applicability and generalizability of the findings. I further recommend my study to be replicated study in other states, populations, and socioeconomic dynamics to assess various links, commonalities, and differences, between a range of abandonment experience and the ability to effectively discharge fatherhood responsibilities.

Implications

The findings of this study provide in-depth insights that could be useful in assisting paternally abandoned Black fathers to successfully raise and discipline their male offspring. In this stud, the paternally abandoned Black fathers expressed the challenges of having to learn various aspects of fatherhood by themselves to raise their male offspring. It is therefore important for measures to be put in place to assist paternally abandoned Black men to learn how to raise male offspring. It emerged from the findings of this study that counseling was considered by some paternally abandoned

fathers to be successful in helping them cope with the difficult past experiences. But the implications expanded further in the suggestion that systemic racism and institutional inequities also contribute to not only the cycle of paternal abandonment but the difficult family dynamics that people of color endure in the United States.

The participants, in encouraging a stronger social support system that should be offered to abandoned Black men and others in their community, also stated that access to such counseling, support, and financial services would bolster the strength and cohesiveness of an entire community. The implications for this study can have a profound influence on the immediate community and society as a whole. When considering the racial perspective of this study and identifying the connection between racial disparities, institutional inequities, and the serious negative effect that communities of color endure in the United States, better understanding in order to correct the issue of abandonment, lends credence to providing local, state, and national resources that would aid in breaking this vicious cycle.

Conclusion

My qualitative phenomenological study addressed the lived experiences of raising and disciplining male offspring among paternally abandoned Black fathers with a history of behavioral problems. The outcome of the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews obtained from five paternally abandoned black fathers provided important insights into the research questions. Concerning how paternally abandoned Black fathers describe the lived experiences of disciplining their male offspring, my study concludes that such fathers adopt a cautious approach to discipline. The cautious approach is

associated with concerns over the likelihood of their sons hating them. Regarding the influence that having male offspring has on fathers' views on fatherhood, my study outcome showed positive influence.

The fathers are motivated to give their sons good role models and to be better fathers. My study however noted that such fathers are motivated by fear of failing their sons as did their fathers. Regarding the experiences of paternal abandonment, my study outcome indicates negative experiences such as the terrible and heartbreaking experiences of neglect, poverty, low-self-esteem, and chaos in their childhood. My study outcome provides insights into the steps, such as counseling, that can be taken to help the paternally abandoned Black fathers to navigate the lived experiences of abandonment and impact on raising and disciplining male offspring.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

- IQ1. Tell me about your childhood upbringing and relationship with your father?
- IQ2. Tell me about your son and raising him?
- a. How do you feel your past effects his future?
- IQ3. How do you perceive your role as a father as it relates to discipline your son?
- IQ4. How would you describe negative discipling?
- IQ5. Conversely, how would you describe positive disciplining?
- a. And in what ways do you demonstrate positive discipling with your son?
- IQ6. When your son is not following the rules or misbehaving after you positively discipline your son, what is your experience in working with him after?
- IQ7. In going back to other forms of discipling, including negative, what experience, if any do you have with eliciting other forms of discipline with your son?
- IQ8. How do you feel positive fathering can affect a child's life?
- IQ9. What do you feel is the biggest obstacle to good fathering?

Appendix B: Facebook Ad/Post

Hi Everyone,

My name is Will Harvey and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am seeking volunteers for a research project on Father Absence - if you are, or know of, a black male whose father was not in their life as a child, and also has a son of their own, please DM or email me at [REDACTED] for more information.

